

Happy New Year Neighbors!

YOUR City Council held several posted meetings yesterday including a *Public Hearing on Annexation*, a *workshop focused on budget primarily*, and an *update presentation by the Long-Range Planning committee*. Here's the general summary:

Annexation: Multiple landowners shared genuine concerns about the potential impact on their lives and livelihood that an annexation might create. It was inspiring to hear the stories of ranchers who have owned and cared for their land for generations, who have invested in maintaining the quality of the land, and taken precautions to preserve the beauty and sustainability of the Hill Country nature that we all get to enjoy as we travel Hwy 71 to our city entrances. Their queries focused on any limitations to their building, land use (example: hunting) and city restrictions. It became clear that the initial letter forwarded to them did not explain in clear lay terms exactly what the intent of the city was – and what the process involved. City staff followed these heartwarming presentations with some clarifications.

- No land owner who intends to continue to use their land for ranching, hunting, or other current use will be annexed if they sign a declaration stating this fact. The declaration does say that if (and when) they do decide to change the purpose of the property or sell it (say to become a cement plant, a strip mall, etc.), then the city would reserve the right to annex that property at that time. Agriculture exemptions would continue in three-year increments, automatically renewed unless either party provides a six month notice of concern. In short, those who have chosen to live on these natural homesites south of Hwy 71 because they wanted the rural life amid nature will not have their lifestyle altered or become part of the city if they so declare.
- The intent of the city's action was clarified to say that while the city had to notify the entire area, their goal is to secure the borders along Hwy 71 (about a 2000 sq ft setback). This part (for those who don't sign a declaration) would be annexed to impose guidelines that prevent large billboards, development of undesirable businesses, or other actions that could detract from the Horseshoe Bay citizens expected quality of life along the borders of the city.

In hindsight, it became clear that communication continues to be an essential focus for the City. A letter from the city prior to this meeting – sent as good neighbors with clarifications – might have prevented much of the angst these ranchers experienced. Lessons learned....that while the intentions were good and care of neighbors was highly considered – they have to be informed of this if trust and shared actions on behalf of all are going to take place. Ultimately, the City will annex no more than 1/3 of the property under review – and less if most provide declarations.

- Other areas considered for annexation (north of Hwy 71) that impact other borders for the city have different variances. Some of these requested annexation, some border existing communities in Horseshoe Bay where development would impact homeowner investments, and others line the Hwy 71 border on the north to the hospital. All will have community negotiations with regard to agriculture exemptions, city services, etc.....along the same format as Bay Country, Pecan Creek, etc. if they are annexed.

In the workshop, a thorough needs assessment was presented by new fire chief, Joe Morris. He gave detailed status of our fire engine 'fleet' with careful attention to safety, response, and fiscal responsibility. He proposed three varied paths for the city to consider at the April budget review. The city Finance Director, Larry Anderson, provided a five year preview of anticipated large cost expenditures for the city to forecast potential costs beyond annual operating expenses. This offered details to be examined more closely prior to the budget discussions beginning in April.

The Long-Range Planning committee appeared in full with a presentation by chair, Jim Long. This mapped out the hundreds of hours already devoted to thoroughly examine the 'state of the union' of Horseshoe Bay currently. They identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs), condensing those to seven areas of focus for ultimate recommendations to the city. The next step, after having interviewed multiple key stakeholders, is to procure a survey that will be made available to all homeowners so that the voice of all can be included in the final Long-Range Plan/Vision for the City of Horseshoe Bay which will go to the city in the coming year. **Applause, applause** really must go to this committee (Jim Long, John Bird, Forrest Covin, Ted Hess, Sharon Jenkins, Lynnette Morrison, Bud Nichols, Nancy Ritter, Larry Stahl, Michael Thuss, Steven Varga) that is devoting personal time toward true determinations about the quality of life elements of safety, interest areas, environment, and growth management so that the reasons we all moved here can be secured for us and future residents.

The City staff/council/committee members continue to look for new ways to ensure good communication flow is available for all. Suggestions are welcome!! In the meantime, be sure you sign up on the City website (<http://www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov>) for the NOTIFY ME to get automatic email information. Read your Beacon articles AND postings. Talk to committee members. Encourage your POA leaders to disseminate information. Share with your neighbors. And offer your opinion/suggestions for YOUR city so that we all honor the blessing of our community.

It is ALWAYS a great day to live in Horseshoe Bay.

Cynthia Clinesmith, council member/chief information officer